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ABSTRACT

This paper presents some empirical findings from the part of the International Socialization Project (an effort to collect more information about the socialization of sport involvement) which dealt with the attitudes of Swedish adolescents toward Olympic games. Attitudes towards the games are regarded here as indicators of affective involvement in sport. Interviews (130 questions) were conducted with Swedish youth at their schools in March and April 1974. The data is presented in descriptive tables. From this study, it appears that Olympic games are a popular phenomenon in the modern sport world among young people. A similar study conducted in Canada confirms that these results are not specific to the Swedish society. (MM)

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THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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ATTITUDES TOWARD OLYMPIC GAMES OF SWEDISH ADOLESCENTS

Paper presented at the international congress of physical activity sciences in Quebec City 11-16 July 1976.

Göran Patriksson

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No 51 September 1976

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF GÖTEBORG Pack S-431 20 MÖLNDAL SWEDEN

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Contents Page

General background and objectives..... 1

Design of the Swedish study..... 2
Sampling procedure..... 2
Method of data collection..... 2

Theoretical frame of reference..... 3

Aim of this paper..... 3

Items used in this study..... 4

Data analysis..... 4

Results..... 5

Sex differences..... 9

Social class differences.....10

Differences between groups with different levels of sport activity.....10

Interaction effects.....11

Discussion.....11

References.....13

Appendix 1.....

Reports from the Institute of Education, University of Göteborg.....

General background and objectives [1)]

As the data used in this study is part of a greater international project I will begin to give a brief sketch of the background and objectives of this project.
In 1966 the "International Committee for Sociology of Sport" (ICSS), at a workshop at the University of Illinois, began to discuss an international reserach project on the process of socialization into sport involvement. After some other meetings the project took a more definite form in 1971 at a symposium on the sociology of sport held in Waterloo. At this symposium it was decided that the project should be coordinated from the university of Waterloo under the leadership of prof. Gerald S. Kenyon. Up to now about fifteen countries take part in the project.

The major objectives of the project as a whole are (Kenyon & Mc Pherson 1971):

- to determine the degree of socialization into sport involvement
- to explain the process of socialization into sport involvement as it applies to the elite athlete and the general population
- to determine whether and why the degree and process of socialization varies cross-nationally.

Our means of getting this increased knowledge of the socialization process has been through interviews with two samples from the general population consisting of, on one hand, 500 urban dwelling adolescents (age 16 or school leaving age), and on the other, 500 urban dwelling young adults (between ages of 26 and 35) and through mailed questionaries to samples of elite athletes in track and field and those participating in each countrie's "national sport".

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1) Financial support for this project was given by the Swedish Sport Research Council.

Design of the Swedish study

The Swedish part of the project started in autumn 1973 with translation of the Canadian Interview Schedule for Adolescents into Swedish. In the following I am going to give a short overview of the other phases of the investigation. A more detailed description of the research design is found in Patriksson (1976).

Sampling procedure

In the overall design of the project it was stated that about 500 urban dwelling adolescents should be sampled on random basis from a town of 500 000 inhabitants or more. In Sweden, Gothenburg - a town at the Swedish westcoast with about half a million inhabitants - was chosen for the investigation. As sampling frame we chose grade 9 in the Swedish school system, which is the last obligatory grade and the pupils are 15-16 years of age. Since we were in the favorable position of having complete class lists of all pupils in grade 9 we could use systematic sampling. In our case we chose pupils born on the 7th, 17th and 27th of any month. The sample drawn in this way consisted of 492 individuals. The final sample consisted of 472 indivduals because 7 pupils were sick, 3 refused to participale and 3 had left town. So the mortality of the sample was 13 individuals (3%), which must be regardes as low.

Method of data collection

Data were collected with structured individual interviews. The interviews were carried out in March and April 1974 at the pupil's schools and lasted about 40 minutes (one lesson).

Theoretical frame of reference

The main focus for the international socialization project is to get more knowledge about socialization into sport involvement. There are several theoretical approaches to socialization like the normative - maturational, the genetic and constitutional, the developmental - cognitive and the learning-theory approach (Ziegler& Child 1969), which all have contributed to the present knowledge about socialization. In the international project a learning theoretical approach [1] is suggested. In this paper I will, however, not deal so much with this theoretical model. Instead I intend to have Kenyons (1969) analyse of different types of involvement in sport (an aspect of the learning theory above) as a staring-point for this paper. Kenyon distinguishes between two types of involvement: primary involvement and secondary involvement. Primary involvement refers to active participation in sport (either in competition or in training) while secondary involvement refers to all other forms of participating, where two subtypes can be identified: "consumption" of sport either directly (spectators) or indirectly (via the mass media) and "production" of sport through the enactment of leadership, organizational and entreprenurial roles. Primary and secondary involvement in sport do not, however, consist only of these behaviourial dimensions. Beyond the behaviourial dimensions there are also a cognitive (knowledge about sport) and an affective dimension (feelings toward sport) of involvement. The affective component, which we will restrict us to in this paper, includes therefore attitudes to different aspects of sport.

Aim of this paper

The purpose with this paper is not to make an analysis of all the Swedish data in the socialization project but only to present some empirical findings from that part of the study which dealt with attitudes to olympic games. Attitudes to olympic games can, in line with our earlier discussions, be regarded as an aspect of the affective sport involvement dimension.

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1) The specific model that is refered to is "a social role - social system approach" (Kenyon & Mc Pherson 1971, p 2).

The general debate on the olympic games has for a long time been intense and the opinions have differed greatly. However, the participants in this debate have mostly consisted of "experts" (authors, sport journalists etc) who usually only represent themselves or some pressure group. What, however, is lacking in this debate is the opinion of people in general. The purpose with this paper is to bring forward some valuable information of how adolescents (age 15-16) look upon the olympic games.

Items used in this study

The interview schedule contained about 130 questions (see Patriksson 1976 for further information), which in turn could be divided into more specific variables. The questions about olympic games consisted of 13 items, but in this study 3 items were excluded. The remaining ten items were formulated in different ways; five items were formulated as statements where the respondents could agree or not agree on a five point scale and five items were formulated as questions with different response alternatives. In this study the "olympic items" are treated as dependent variables. Sex, social class (classified in three classes based on father's occupation) and degree of primary involvement in sport are treated as independent variables.

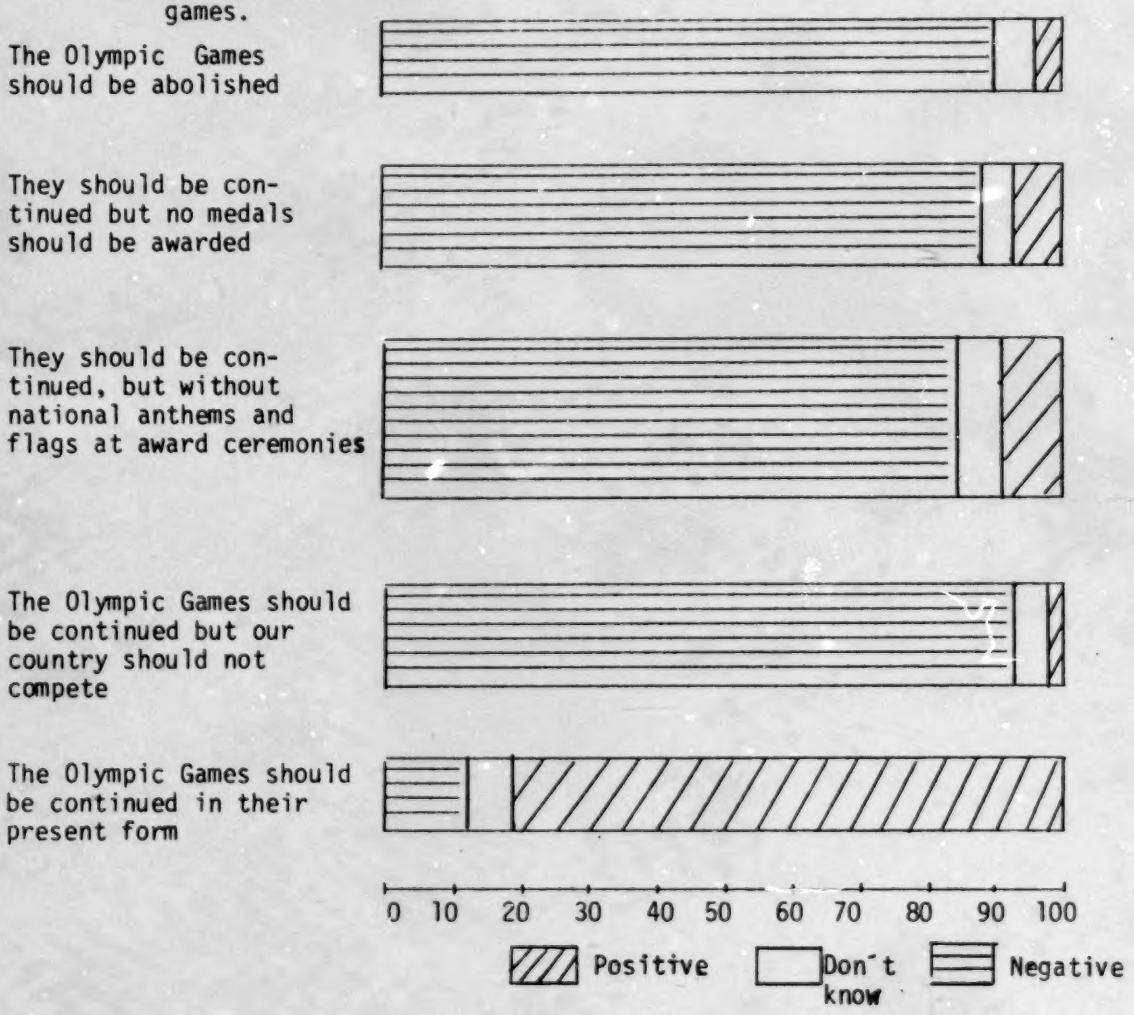
Data analysis

All the data have been coded and puched and transformed to electronic tape. The analysis of the data have been done at the EDB-center at the university of Gothenburg. The data is in this study presented in descriptive diagrams and tables using percentages for the total sample and when the material is divided into sex, social class and degree of primary involvement. When analyses are made on subgroup level we have also controlled, through holding constant one of the other independent variables, that the correlations (or lack of correlations) between the independent and the dependent variables were "true" or if there were interaction - effects or "spurions" correlations. The last mentioned analyses are - for space reason - not documented in this paper.

Results

The results are first presented for the total group and then for the different subgroups (sex, social class, activity levels). Let's begin with the results from the attitude statements, which are summarized in diagram 1. In this and the other diagrams the two positive alternatives are put together into one positive category and the same thing has been done with the two negative alternatives [1].

Diagram 1. The adolescent's answers to some statements about the olympic games.


The Olympic Games should be abolished
They should be continued but no medals should be awarded
They should be continued, but without national anthems and flags at award ceremonies
The Olympic Games should be continued but our country should not compete
The Olympic Games should be continued in their present form
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Positive
Don't know
Negative

1) Which alternatives that are positive or negative depends of course on the formulation of the statement, that is if it is formulated in positive or in negative terms.

The results from diagram 1 are very unambignous. Most adolescents have positive attitudes to Olympic Games (OG). More than 90% don´t agree to the statement the OG should be abolished. Almost as many (89%) are opposed to the proposal that no medals should be awarded and 85% are opposed to the statement that the OG should continue without national anthems and flags at award ceremonies. The statement that the OG should continue without Sweden´s participation is rejected by no less than 95% of the adolescents. 82% of the sample don´t want any changes at all but want the OG to be continued in their present form.

Let us now go on to some more specific questions about the OG. The distribution of the answers to these questions is shown in tables 1-5.

Table 1. The adolescent´s answer to the question: Should the Government financially support athletes who wish to train for and compete in the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%
Yes	82
No	7
Don´t know	11
Total	100
N	464

Table 2. The adolescent´s answers to the question: "To what extent should our country shift financial resources from such areas as education, povery programs, welfare and housing in order to host the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%
All that is necessary	58
Some resources	30
No resources from these areas	7
Don´t know	5
Total	100
N	464

Table 3. The adolescent´s answers to the question: "Should our country increase its financial debt or go into debt to host the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%
Yes	6
No	87
Don´t know	6
Total	99
N	465

Table 4. The adolescent´s answers to the question: "Is it important for the prestige of our country to host the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%
Yes	43
No	38
Don´t know	19
Total	100
N	464

Table 5. The adolescent´s ranking of different reasons for this country´s participation in the Olympic Games?"

Reasons	%
To win medals	7
To compete and represent the country	49
To promote brotherhood, peace and communication with other countries	43

From these tables we can among other things, see that 82% (table 1) are positive to that the Government financially should support athletes who wish to train for and compete in the OG. We can also conclude that no less than 58% have the opinion that "all necessary financial resources" in Sweden should be transferred from areas as education, poverty programs welfare and housing to hosting the OG. Only 8% think that no resources should be taken from these areas (table 2). If the youth is positive to redistribute the country´s economic resources to the arangement of OG, they are, however, negative (87%) to that Sweden should put itself into debt in order to arrange the OG (table 3).

If we disregard the economical aspects of the OG the results from table 4 indicate that there are more adolescents who think that it is important for Sweden to host the OG (43%) than there are adolescents who do not have this opinion (38%). Finally it is evident (table 5) that the greatest proportion of adolescents think that the most important reason for participating in the OG is "to compete and represent their country". Only 7% regarded "to win medals" as the most important reason. To judge from these empirical findings the olympic thought has a very strong support from adolescents in general and only a minority holds negative attitudes toward the OG. Having presented the attitudes for the total group of adolescents we shall now see if there are any differences between different subgroups like boys and girls, higher and lower social classes and adolescents with high and low primary involvement in sport. These analysis are presented in the next sections.

Sex differences

In many earlier studies it has been shown that there are clear differences between boys and girls concerning the degree of physical activity and competition (Engström 1972, 1975, Kinnrell 1976, Patriksson 1976), interests in sport (Engström 1972, Persson & Dahlgren 1975, Aggestedt & Tebelius 1975) and in direct and indirect sport consumption (McPherson 1975). In all these studies boys were more involved in sport than girls. Could we see the same relationship between the sexes when we come to attitudes toward OG? The data that can illuminate this question is found in appendix 1 in diagram 2 and in tables 6-10. It appears to be very small differences between the sexes. There is a slight tendency that boys are somewhat more positive to OG than girls. What are the reasons behind these small differences in attitudes to OG when there are marked differences in other aspects of sport? I think that one way is to seek the explanation in the structure of the Olympic Games which distinguish a great deal from other sport events. What I have in mind is that the OG to a high extent are bound to traditions. Traditions which have many elements of ceremonious character with little or no connection with sport itself.

I can only mention such things as the olympic oath, the olympic fire, the parading nations in "national uniforms" at the inauguation, the presence of a lot of celebrities etc. These non-sport factors could at least contribute to that girls are almost as positive as boys to OG.

Social class differences

Previous research in Sweden about the relationship between social class and sport shows no homogenious picture (Aggestedt & Eriksson 1971, Engström 1972, 1975, Patriksson 1976). This research shows, however, that there is a slight tendency that adolescents from higher social classes are more active in sport and more interested in sport than adolescents with lower socio-economic background [1]. This tendency is more pronounced for boys than for girls. Social class position also seem to ineract with age in such a way that social class differences are more marked for higher ages than for lower ages (Lundahl 1971), that is social class plays a more important role for grown-ups and elderly people than for children and adolescents.

The question for our study is if we find the same trends concerning attitudes to the OG. The results are presented in appendix 1 in diagram 3 and in tables 11-15. An inspection of the data seems to show that the differences in attitudes between adolescents from different social classes are mostly small and unsystematic. There is, however, a certain tendency that youths with higher socio-economic background have more positive attitudes than youths from lower social classes.

Differences between groups with different levels of sport activity

One can assume that there is a positive correlation between sport activity and interests in and attitudes to sport. Engström (1972) has for example shown that pupils who often practise sport are more interested in physical training in school.

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1) In many other countries there seem to exist stronger relationships between social class and participation in sport (social inequality). See for example Gruneau (1975).

Another study by Brunnberg (1971) also give support for this assumption. In his study it was evident that athletes had more positive attitudes to the value system in sport than non-athletes. These trends appear to be the same in this study. From the data in diagram 4 and tables 16-20 in appendix 1 we can draw the conclusion that adolescents who are more active in sport are more positive to the OG than the less active.

Interaction effects

As was said before we both controlled and looked for "new" relationships between the different independent and dependent variables through taking in an additional variable (another independent variable) in the analyses. In these analyses it appeared that in most cases this third factor had no effect at all. In one case, however, a systematic interaction effect was discovered, namely between sex and social class. The interaction between these variables can at least partly explain the small differences in attitudes between the sexes and between social classes, since the sex variable "draws in different directions" depending on the social class concerned. These more refined analyses gave accordingly the following results concerning sex and social class: (I) girls in the highest social class had more positive attitudes to OG than boys in the same social class, while the reverse was true in the middle and lowest social class; (II) girls in the highest social class and boys in the middle class hold the most favourable attitudes to OG.

Discussion

From this study we can conclude that the OG is a popular phenomenon in the modern sport world among young people. That these results are not specific to the Swedish society shows a similar study in Canada by McPherson & Kenyon (1976).

It is also striking that, even if there exists differences between sexes, social classes and active and non active in sport, the differences are located high up on the positive scale. In our earlier terminology we can say that a very large part of Swedisn urban adolescents are highly affective involved in the OG. The small variations in attitudes between the subcategories (sex, social class, active and non active in sport) differ from other studies which have analysed the relationship between these variables and different types of involvement in sport. A tentative interpretation of our results is that the OG - like most traditions - function as a unifying and integrating factor that cut across different subgroups in society. For people in modern and often bureauoratic societies, the OG is one of the few occasions when people can identify themselves with their own nation.

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Diagram 2. The adolescent's answers, divided by sex, to some statements about the Olympic Games.

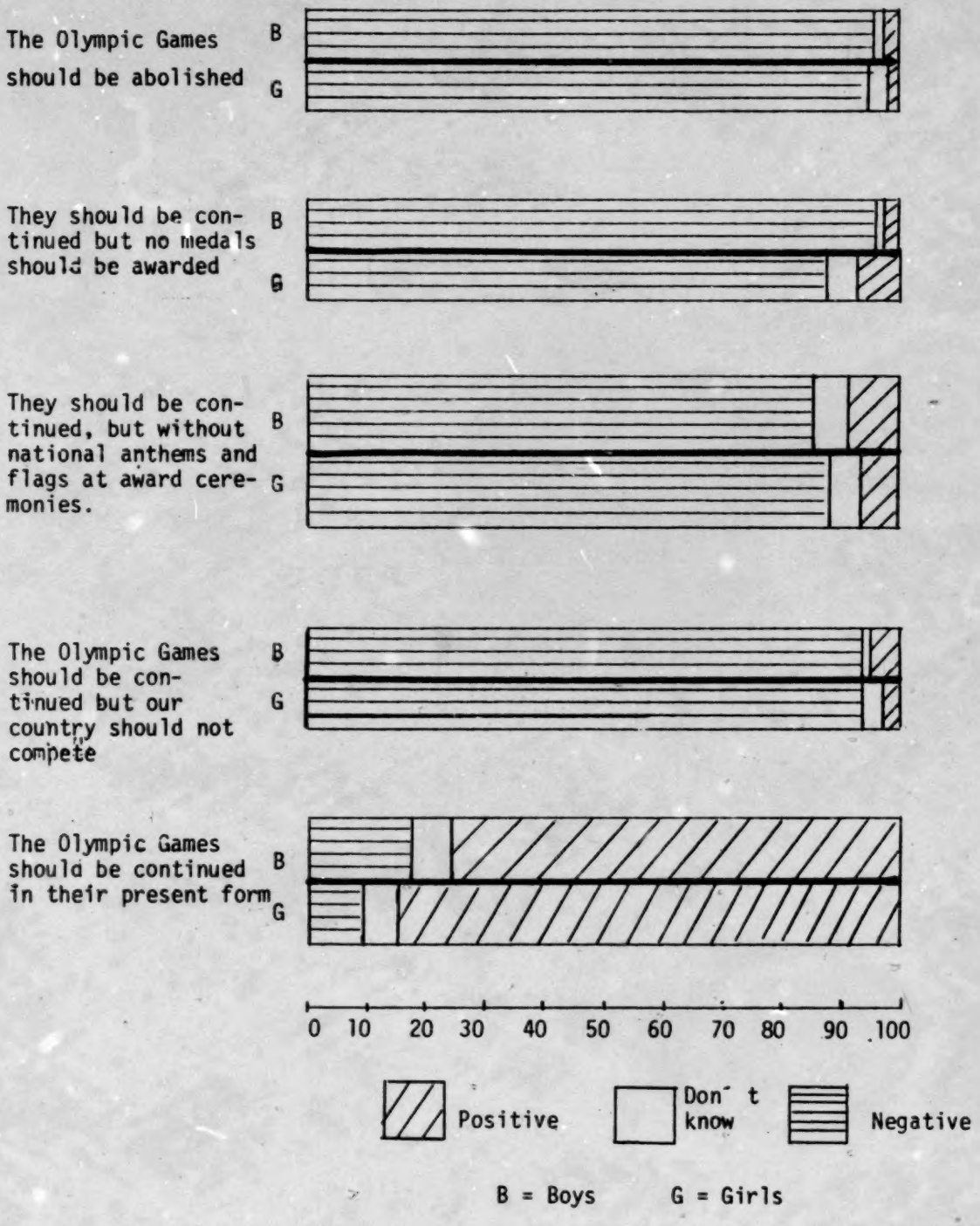


Table 6. The adolescent's answers divided by sex to the question: "Should the Government financially support athletes who wish to train for and compete in the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%	
	Boys	Girls
Yes	88	75
No	5	10
Don't know	7	15
Total	100	100
N	215	240

Table 7. The adolescent's answers divided by sex to the question: "To what extent should our country shift financial resources from such areas as education, povery programs, welfare and housing in order to host the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%	
	Boys	Girls
All that is necessary	55	62
Some resources	35	27
No resources from these	2	2
Don't know	8	9
Total	100	100
N	214	239

Table 8. The adolescent's answers divided by sex, to the question: " Should our country increase its financial debt or go into debt to host the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%	
	Boys	Girls
Yes	5	6
No	91	86
Don't know	4	8
Total	100	100
N	215	241

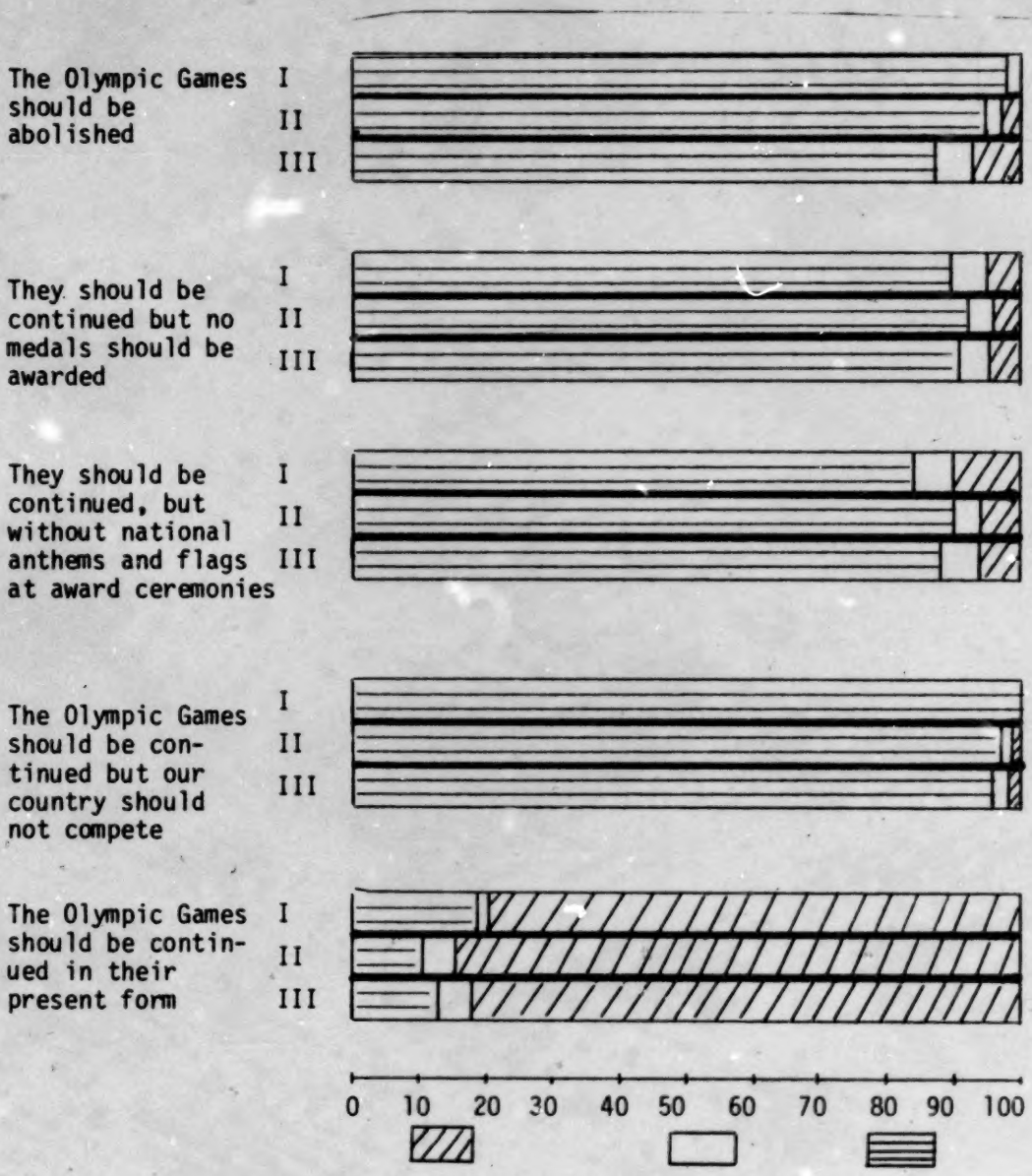
Table 9. The adolescent's answers divided by sex, to the question: " Is it important for the prestige of our country to host the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	%	
	Boys	Girls
Yes	47	38
No	39	38
Don't know	14	24
Total	100	100
N	215	240

Table 10. The adolescent's ranking divided by sex of different reasons for this country's participation in the Olympic Games?"

Reasons	%	
	Boys	Girls
To win medals	12	4
To compete and represent the country	53	46
To promote brotherhood, peace and communication with other countries	35	50

Diagram 3. The adolescent's answers divided into social classes to some statements about the Olympic Games.



I = High social class

II = Middle social class

III = Low social class

Table 11. The adolescent's in different social classes answers to the question: "Should the Government financially support athletes who wish to train for and compete in the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	Social class		
	I	II	III
Yes	85	83	79
No	7	6	7
Don't know	8	10	13
Total	100	99	99
N	87	149	192

Table 12. The adolescent's in different social classes answers to the question: "To what extent should our country shift financial resources from such areas as education, povery programs, welfare and housing in order to host the Olympic Games?"

Alternatives	Social class		
	I	II	III
All that is necessary	60	60	55
Some resources	31	31	32
No resources from these areas	5	0	4
Don't know	4	9	9
Total	100	100	100
N	87	150	190

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